

# Chapter 8

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## *Methodology: A Prescription for Redeveloping Suburban Downtowns for a Sustainable Future*

*The human consequences of any environment are the measure of its quality, and not the form itself. But not the process itself, either.... In particular situations, sometimes form and sometimes process can be the dominant consideration, but usually they work together. How a feature got there, what it is now, how it is managed and how it is changing, must all be evaluated. Ideally, models will specify form, creation, and management as one.*

**-- Kevin Lynch<sup>1</sup>**

Sustainable suburban downtown redevelopment cannot adequately be put into a rigidly defined process or model. The community is too unique, the process too complex, and the variables too diverse. Yet Suisun City, Tualatin Commons, and numerous other large-scale projects demonstrate that successful redevelopments have many things in common. What communities need, then, is not an absolute formula, but rather an outline, a methodology. They need a prescription for redeveloping their downtowns and city centers for a sustainable future.

A fourteen-step methodology developed by the author is proposed in the following pages to help suburban communities redevelop their downtowns in a manner that is economically, environmentally, and socially viable. It is not a guarantee, but is based on the experiences of successful redevelopments in Suisun City and Tualatin, as well as a variety of other redevelopment projects from Oregon to Florida. Its purpose is not to dictate an uncompromising approach, but rather to offer a logical sequence of

***Suburban Downtown Redevelopment Methodology***

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| Step 1.  | Recognize the need for redevelopment by evaluating the values of a strong suburban core.           |
| Step 2.  | Develop a vision of the community itself and a redeveloped downtown specifically.                  |
| Step 3.  | Develop a comprehensive community involvement approach.  |
| Step 4.  | Develop a set of community principles and goals for redevelopment, including community indicators. |
| Step 5.  | Recognize responsibility as a public developer and act on that.                                    |
| Step 6.  | Develop a specific redevelopment plan.   |
| Step 7.  | Develop a comprehensive financing scheme.  |
| Step 8.  | Hire a quality design team.  |
| Step 9.  | Conduct an environmental review.   |
| Step 10. | Develop stringent but workable design guidelines.  |
| Step 11. | Develop a marketing plan.  |
| Step 12. | Work with private developers in an efficient public-private partnership.                           |
| Step 13. | Develop and implement an evaluation mechanism.   |
| Step 14. | Promote the redeveloped downtown as the place to be.   |

events--many of which will occur simultaneously--that if followed increase chances of success considerably.

The methodology was developed by analyzing the most

prominent steps and activities conducted to create the projects discussed earlier. Where steps were not undertaken in the case studies, but appear necessary--such as development and implementation of an evaluation plan--they have been added. Ultimately, the steps are a holistic approach to redevelopment--not an inflexible mandate, but rather a series of suggestions and opportunities.

***Step 1. Recognize the need for redevelopment by evaluating the values of a strong suburban core.***

While for many suburban communities the case for redevelopment is obvious, for others the choice may not be so clear. Redevelopment opportunities can be identified in a number of ways. The first is by listening to residents. Whether directly or indirectly, when residents complain about the lack of a city center or community identity, that is a good indicator that the current downtown--if there is one--is not meeting citizen expectations.

But residents speak in less verbal ways, as well. A lack of



**Tualatin Commons now provides the Portland suburb with the recognizable city center it never had.** S. Buntin.

activity downtown is a sure sign that, for whatever reasons, the area is unsuccessful. They may be spending their time either in their homes, eliminating many chances for social interaction, or in other places that are more satisfactory. Many residents of Suisun City, for example, spent their leisure and shopping time at nearby Fairfield or perhaps in Sacramento, Berkeley, or San Francisco. Tualatin's residents frequented the adjacent Washington Square and downtown Portland. Residents of Mountain View spent their time and money in regional malls throughout the suburbanized area between San Francisco and San Jose, while those in Boca Raton visited the

boutique stores and galleries of West Palm Beach and Fort Lauderdale, and the 1.3 million-square-foot "Town Center" that put the Boca Raton Mall out of business.<sup>2</sup>

Redevelopment of the core is not meant to restrict residents from visiting the economic, cultural, and political centers of large central cities like San Francisco and Portland, of course, but it is meant to give residents of the suburb their own city center, so they don't have to travel long distances and so there is a tangible and positive community identity.

Redevelopment opportunities are also identified by a lack of economic investment in the city center. Suisun City's inability to fund essential city services because Old Town and the adjacent Main Street were areas of severe disinvestment was one of the biggest factors in redeveloping its downtown. In Tualatin, the pet food factory closed down and left a large economic void. Additionally, other revenue sources in the city center were minor, and could not provide the economic base that a higher density, well-planned city center does. In Boca Raton, San Diego's Hillcrest neighborhood, Arlington, and Mountain View, it was not as much a case of city center disinvestment as the failure of large retail malls which could not compete with newer, regional shopping malls.

Similarly, if the city center does not provide adequate or

fulfilling employment--generating income for a respectable share of suburban residents--then it is not succeeding. Many of the industrial facilities were abandoned in Suisun City, compounded by the fact that small businesses were failing on Main Street. Without the Hervin plant in Tualatin, the already scarce citizen presence in the city center was reduced even more. Nor was the site providing income opportunities. And failure to create income for the cities or employment opportunities for residents sealed the fate of the malls in Boca Raton and other cities, as well.

Even if overall tax base and economic opportunities are adequate in the suburb, it is worth evaluating where that investment occurs, and how it affects the downtown. Peripheral development is considerably more costly than infill and redevelopment for the suburb because the extension of infrastructure is expensive. Additionally, big box development at the city's edge can be costly to business owners in the downtown area. The siting and opening of a Wal-Mart outside the city center, for example, is notoriously harmful to downtown businesses which cannot compete with the megastore's low prices and which therefore lose customer base, often dramatically.<sup>3</sup> Lower density edge development can cripple a downtown economy, and such trends point to the need for redevelopment.

Noxious downtown uses--such as the odoriferous Blue

Mountain Dog Food plant in Tualatin, the contaminating oil refineries in Suisun City, and a contaminated Portland Power & Light electric substation along the Willamette River in Portland,<sup>4</sup> make the suburban center unsafe, unhealthy, and unsightly, providing an environmental reason for redevelopment. Such environmental hazards come in a variety of forms, affecting both the built and natural environments. Unsafe buildings, outdated infrastructure, abandoned structures, and damaged environmental amenities all provide opportunities for redevelopment.

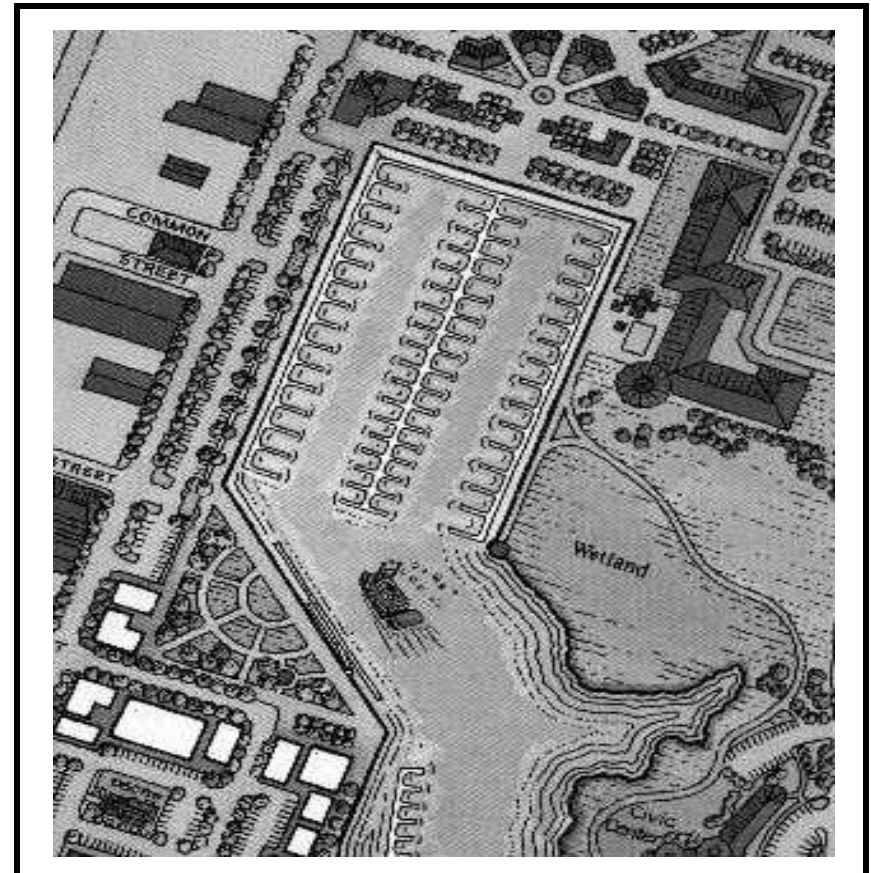
Many social factors can indicate that redevelopment should be considered, as well. Suisun City's Crescent neighborhood, for example, used nearly half of the city's police resources, though it represented just under 20 percent of the population. While crime was not an issue in the redevelopment of Tualatin's center, public safety related to pedestrian-auto interaction was. In Portland, there was considerable concern for citizen access to the Willamette River, at the time blocked by an expressway. And in Arlington, the failed shopping center left a large void in the place where citizens actively gathered years before.

Perhaps the primary reason to redevelop is to give the suburb a usable and recognizable core, thereby giving its residents a sense of pride and the community a sense of place. Suisun City, Tualatin, and

to a small degree Mountain View were all known for conventional subdivision development; i.e., low-density, single-family detached homes readily available to middle-class residents on the periphery of the city.<sup>5</sup> But in Suisun City's case, its negative attributes far outweighed any good ones. In Tualatin's case, the odor from the pet food factory was far more memorable than much else in the city center. And in Mountain View, despite a recently renewed downtown, placeless sprawl of a higher density nature continued.

What the cities needed, and what they got, was a true urban core where residents are happy to come, activities result in round-the-clock use, and a symbolic, civic, and economic center reside. Suisun City's call to bring residents to the waterfront and celebrate its cultural and historical significance demanded downtown redevelopment. Tualatin's call for a "heart" to an otherwise centerless city, for a place for people to go, and for a long-term core mandated that it redevelop its city center. Boca Raton's call for architecture and a linear plaza that integrated residential, retail, and recreational uses while celebrating the sub-tropical climate likewise spelled the need for quality redevelopment.

It is not likely that a suburb will undertake comprehensive



**An artist's rendition of a redeveloped Suisun City was derived from the city's vision for a revitalized downtown.** Suisun City Amended Downtown Specific Plan.

redemption efforts for just one reason, however. For Suisun City, Tualatin, and other cities, a number of factors pointed to one

conclusion: redevelop or fade into shapeless suburbia. Redevelopment was a viable long-term solution to many ills.

There are, additionally, a number of values inherent in a strong suburban core. These include a sense of place; spaces for social encounters and festivities; linkages via accessible pathways to other parts of the suburb; recognition of the past and creation of a brighter future; the placement of people over cars and therefore a reduction in accidents, congestion, emissions, and auto ownership-related expenses; 24-hour-per-day critical mass of users to support local businesses; restored natural and built environments; mix of recreational, housing, and business opportunities; increased tax base from business and tourism; conservation of resources; and adequate, long-term infrastructure. For more information, refer to Chapter 4.

**Step 2. *Develop a vision of the community itself and a redeveloped downtown specifically.***

After deciding that redevelopment is appropriate, the first step should be creation of a vision for how political leaders and citizens want the suburb to be. A vision for the redevelopment site itself should then be crafted.

Regional visions are becoming more and more common as metropolitan areas struggle with growth-related issues. Portland, San

Diego, Denver, and Vancouver, British Columbia, are among the many metropolitan areas that have developed regional visions which establish goals in an attempt to direct growth to its most appropriate locations.<sup>6</sup> While a suburb interacts in the regional context, it also makes sense that it develop its own vision for what it wants to be as a community. Will it be a relatively stand-alone city, surrounded by secured open space? Will it be primarily transit-oriented? Will it house a large share of low-income residents, a large share of office buildings, a regional shopping center?

Creation of a vision for the suburb's future ensures that every action each level of city government undertakes helps the community to reach its goals. It can be developed in and of itself, or as an integrated part of the community's master or comprehensive plan. The vision is the overall statement about what the community wants to be.

Portland's *Central City Plan* provides a good example: "We envision the Central City as the region's economic center, and its transportation hub, with an exhilarating environment, that focuses on the Willamette River, a good place to live, a city that cares, where we work together. Above all, we envision a livable city!"<sup>7</sup>

Creation of a specific vision for the redevelopment is essential in performing later steps, including development of the site plan. But

it is also essential in determining just what the suburb and its residents want for the city center. While in Suisun City's case, the physical amenities already onsite--the channel, Old Town, Main Street, and the train depot--narrowed the choices for a redevelopment vision considerably, in Tualatin's case it started almost completely with a blank slate. Portland, on the other hand, had completely different parameters in removing the freeway and restoring the river far before the creation of RiverPlace.

The community should determine just what it is that is unique and positive about it--there is always something--and build the vision from there. Are there certain historic structures worth redeveloping around? Is there an environmental feature--a river, field, lake--that merits central focus? Is there a transit stop onsite or in the works that logically serves as a focal point?

Or perhaps what makes the suburb special is not its physical characteristics at all, but something else. Is there an ethnic and cultural heritage which defines the community? Are the residents active in promoting one or more community-building causes? Does something in the suburb's past--a legend of the founding mothers and fathers, a defining moment when the town overcame a tremendous obstacle--warrant revitalization and central focus?

Once the suburb defines those characteristics worth saving

and promoting, physical and otherwise, it can incorporate them into a vision of what it wants for its downtown or core area. The vision should be as specific as possible at this early stage, but also adaptable to changing conditions. It may simply be a list of characteristics the community would like to see: new public plaza, restored museum, mixed-use retail and housing, small-lot single-family detached housing, restoration of the creek and development of a waterfront park, development of a viable bike path system, etc.

Mountain View's *Precise Plan* for The Crossings, for example, states that "redevelopment of [the site] shall (1) facilitate and be coordinated with improvement of transit facilities, including a train platform and station for CalTrain, and bus stop facilities for Santa Clara County...; (2) establish a strong sense of neighborhood [by organizing it] around public streets, with streets as public open space, buildings oriented to streets, and a neighborhood-serving retail center...; [and] (3) provide a distinctive neighborhood center with publicly accessible green space, pedestrian-oriented retail and commercial uses, and a good pedestrian connection to residential buildings."<sup>8</sup>

Or it may be a more holistic statement, as with Suisun City's downtown redevelopment: "That downtown Suisun City has the opportunity to become a unique waterfront town that is pleasant to

live in and at the same time serves as a regional destination..., [drawing] on an unusual mix of characteristics--a working waterfront, a historic Main Street, established neighborhoods, direct freeway access, an Amtrak/Intercity rail station, a rich natural environment, and a location that is in the path of regional growth.”<sup>9</sup>

**Step 3. *Develop a comprehensive community involvement approach.***

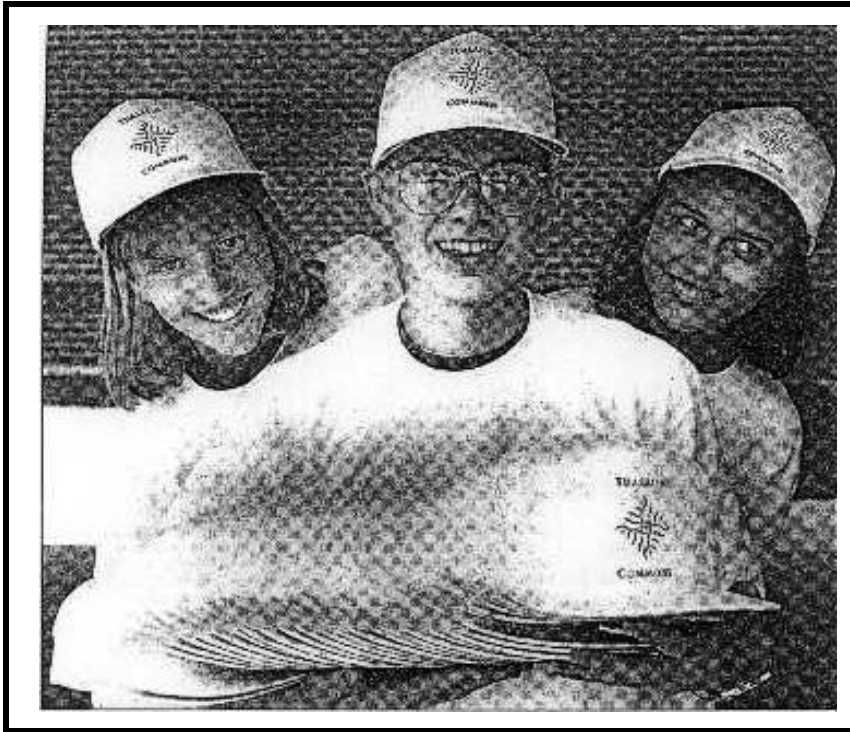
Community involvement is essential for ensuring redevelopment success for three main reasons. First, it is morally and ethically appropriate to involve community members in decisions that will directly affect their economic, social, and physical environments. Second, citizens know their community as well as and perhaps better than many of their elected representatives. They can create ideas which will work in an environment they know. Third, citizens need to buy into the plan, supporting it so that once the redevelopment occurs, it is indeed a community asset that they happily and comfortably use again and again. Community involvement also helps to stem real and potential citizen opposition.

It is therefore necessary for the suburb to develop a comprehensive community involvement approach. Suisun City, Tualatin, and San Diego used two general approaches for involving the community. The first is a structured, well-defined citizens’ group

with specific instructions for their participation in the redevelopment process. Suisun City assembled the Citizens Advisory Committee, with citizen members from key parts of the city: business owners, landowners, educators, planners, architects, homemakers, environmentalists, and others.<sup>10</sup>

Tualatin used its citizen-member Urban Renewal Advisory Committee to advise the city and its design team on creation of the site plan for Tualatin Commons and associated urban renewal issues.<sup>11</sup> URAC holds monthly meetings which are open to the public, and reports directly to the Tualatin Development Commission.

San Diego’s Hillcrest neighborhood formed the Blue Ribbon Committee to involve the community in drafting guidelines for the city’s use in judging site proposals.<sup>12</sup> The group then collaborated with other residential and business groups, including the Hillcrest B u s i n e s s



**Tualatin High School students participated in the Tualatin Commons redevelopment process by selling caps, t-shirts, and sweatshirts with the Commons's logo on them** R. Bach, The Oregonian.

Association, Uptown Community Planners, and University Heights Community, in planning workshops.

The second approach is a series of public hearings and other meetings, both required by law and conducted in addition to mandated meetings when necessary to receive resident input and gauge the overall citizen atmosphere. Open meetings which are

published well ahead of time and held in a convenient location, time, and date ensure that the public has an adequate opportunity to participate in the redevelopment process. Additionally, Mizner Park's developer urged Boca Raton's Community Redevelopment Agency and City Council to hold a referendum to gauge support for the proposal, to give all citizens the chance to participate.<sup>13</sup>

There are a number of specific community involvement tools available to redeveloping communities. One of Tualatin's more successful mechanisms for querying citizens was a survey mailed to all residents asking for opinions about the redevelopment: what it should look like, how it should be implemented, etc.<sup>14</sup> Tualatin also held a poster contest in its three elementary schools to ask the children what they would like at Tualatin Commons.

Local mechanisms that are already in place for providing information to citizens are ideal for inviting community input. Newsletters, local newspapers, utility bill stuffers, local television stations, and local magazines can all be tapped to provide information and request comments.

The Sacramento-based Center for Livable Communities identifies a number of public participation tools, concluding that, "A



**Relocation and restoration of Suisun City's historic Lawler House helped meet the city's goal of preserving and enhancing the historic character of the area.** S. Buntin.

proactive planning process which includes a well-designed citizen involvement component allows citizens to understand exactly what it is they are getting and assures that everyone will be happy with the plan and the individual projects at buildout.”<sup>15</sup> Some of the participatory planning tools the Center identifies include the following:<sup>16</sup>

- ***Design charrettes***, which are intensive one- to seven-day collaborative efforts in which citizens, designers, developers, landowners, and all other key players are brought together to create a ready-to-implement detailed design plan for the redevelopment area.
- ***Guided tours***, which lead citizens and other stakeholders through the area to be redeveloped. A guidebook with background information and a series of questions is provided, and a workshop to facilitate discussion is held afterwards.
- ***Visual Preference Survey***, in which citizens view between 40 and 240 slides showing a wide variety of streetscapes and architectural elements that they then rank on a scale of -10 to +10. Collective scores are averaged to determine what the community's citizens most prefer.
- ***Hands-on simulation games***, which allow citizens to develop a number of physical scenarios for the redevelopment area's future by moving toy-like models of scaled buildings and land use icons. Small groups of citizens are then formed to create land use plans based on these models, and the larger group comes together at the end for discussion and recommendations.
- ***Computer simulation***, in which citizens can see a simulation of the redevelopment site (using a scanned picture or photograph) with and without various uses, buildings, and features.

Another valuable aspect of community involvement is keeping the city council and other political leaders informed and involved.

Without city council and similar support, redevelopment projects will not go far. Communities must ultimately ensure that open communication lines are maintained between the redevelopment agency, citizens, business owners, developers, and especially elected leaders.

**Step 4. *Develop a set of community principles and goals for redevelopment, including community indicators.***

Redevelopment progress and long-term success rely heavily on both realistic goals and measurable indicators. From the community and redeveloped downtown visions created earlier, suburbs can develop a set of community principles and goals to guide the redevelopment project.

Principles of sustainability specifically ensure that the suburb, citizens, design team, and developers all have the same overall guidelines. These guidelines are established to promote economic, environmental, and social viability over the long term even while the greatest concerns will likely be for immediate redevelopment of the area.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's seven principles provide a good example.<sup>17</sup> They include resource

conservation, economic viability, livability, and health and safety. They are valuable not only because they provide holistic guidelines for citizens and developers to follow, but because--when coupled with community indicators--they are measurable. For more information, refer to Chapter 3.

Redevelopment goals are more directly related to the redevelopment project itself. The most effective goals are those that are fundamentally based upon community involvement, as in Tualatin's case. From a series of public meetings and a survey, for instance, the Tualatin Development Commission created a set of ten citizens' objectives for Tualatin Commons. Likewise, Suisun City's Citizens Advisory Committee helped develop goals for the downtown's redevelopment. Goals were also created for the other projects, either through larger plans--such as Portland's *Central City Plan* and Mountain View's *Precise Plan*--or through direct involvement with residents, as with Uptown District, Mizner Park, and The Village at Shirlington.

Community indicators of sustainability are established in order to effectively gauge, in a quantitative manner, the direction of the



**Tualatin's public-private partnership resulted in developments, such as the Tualatin Mews offices, that are mixed-use, energy efficient, and aesthetically pleasing.** S. Buntin.

community to help citizens identify the best methods to enhance viability. Though a relatively new concept, community indicators have been used successfully to evaluate their progress on community goals. They work well when created from measurable baselines that apply specifically to the community or redevelopment area, when well- documented, and when understandable.

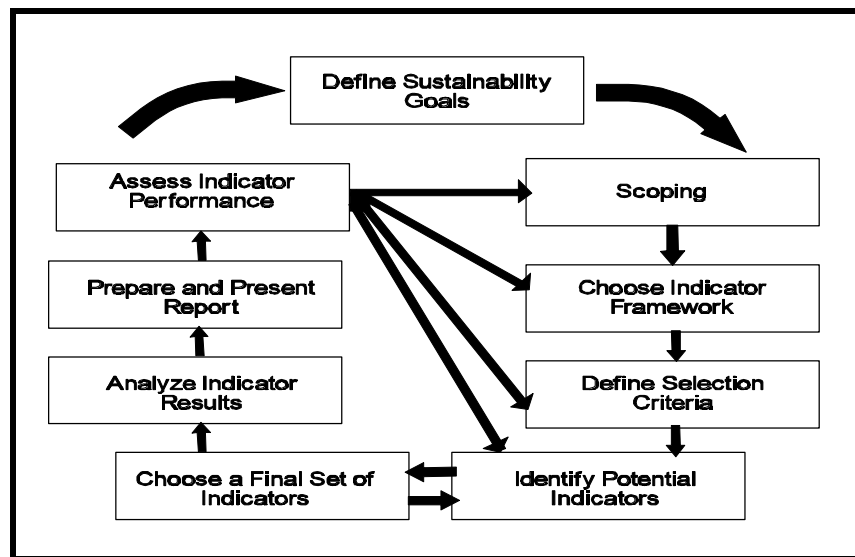
At this time, the projects discussed previously are not utilizing community indicators to measure success, though Portland does have

specific principles of sustainability in place. However, a number of other communities have implemented indicators. For example, the non-profit group Sustainable Seattle has developed a comprehensive list of community indicators for the Seattle-King County region.<sup>18</sup> These fall into five categories: environment, population and resources, economy, youth and education, and health and community. Measurable indicators include the number of wild salmon returning to spawn in Cedar River and Bear Creek; vehicle miles traveled per capita and gasoline consumption per capita; number of children living below the poverty line; high school graduation rate; and asthma hospitalization rate for children.

A number of communities already have or are in the process of developing community indicators; Appendix C contains a comprehensive list of such communities.

The University of Toronto's Virginia Maclaren has identified nine steps for developing effective indicators and a viable reporting mechanism.<sup>19</sup> The first step is defining the sustainability goals for which indicators are needed. This is largely the same process as that discussed in the suburban downtown redevelopment methodology's fourth step. The community should then define the scope of the report and choose an appropriate indicator framework, such as goal-based or issue-based (step 3). The fourth step is identification of a

set of potential indicators through an expert/community integrative process, while the fifth is evaluating the indicators and selecting a final set. Once indicators are deemed appropriate, data must be collected and analyzed (step 6), from which the sustainability report is prepared (step 7) and ultimately presented to the community and its elected representatives (step 8). The last step is assessing indicator performance, as conditions and needs will likely change with time.



The nine steps of developing indicators in the urban sustainability reporting process. V. Maclaren.

### **Step 5. *Recognize responsibility as a public developer and act on that.***

Those communities that take large-scale redevelopment projects in their own hands seem to be the most successful, for they ensure complete control over the process (given the dynamics of the market, developers, citizens, and the built and natural environments). Both Suisun City and Tualatin struggled to find one developer who would redevelop the entire downtown and city center, respectively. But these projects are often too large and demand too much attention to detail to simply let a developer win a bid and then run free.

RiverPlace is utilizing a phasing approach with two developers for the main residential, office, and retail phases and individual developers who will predominantly develop single parcels in the future.

As the other projects demonstrate, however, public ownership of all land and utilization of a number of developers are not the only solutions. For The Crossings and The Village at Shirlington, the cities never owned the sites, though did work with individual developers in creating livable places. The city owned the site at Uptown District, but consequently sold it to a single developer; while at Mizner Park, the city purchased the site from the developer and now leases it back.

It makes sense for larger, centralized projects, however, to

divide the redevelopment site into specific parcels that private developers can purchase and develop as long as they follow the word and intent of the specific plan, design guidelines, and other community-established criteria. Individual parcels in Suisun City range in size from that of the entire Victorian Harbor neotraditional neighborhood, to a 4,700-square foot retail pad at Harbor Plaza.<sup>20</sup> The Tualatin Economic Development Department opted to divide Tualatin Commons into seven individual parcels, each designated for a specific use. The Portland Development Commission allows development of individual parcels by different developers in RiverPlace phases.

To facilitate development of the parcels, the cities also invested heavily in infrastructure and public spaces. Publicly owned infrastructure such as streets and utilities, and public spaces such as plazas, promenades, parks, and parking structures can in fact be key to the redevelopment's success for numerous reasons. They increase the property value of adjacent parcels. They provide security to developers who realize the public amenities will not just go away. They allow the suburb to retain public control of public spaces and structures. They more fairly assess the costs of operating the facilities to the entire community. And, public facilities and spaces bring people back into downtown.

An early step for communities interested in large-scale redevelopment should be securing the land. The simplest, though not necessarily least expensive method is fee-simple purchase. Suisun City, Tualatin, Portland, and San Diego alike acquired all necessary lands prior to physical renovation and new construction onsite. Boca Raton purchased the site for Mizner Park only after the developer was willing to sell. Suisun City purchased land as part of the overall redevelopment process, Tualatin purchased the site before the concept for Tualatin Commons arose, RiverPlace purchased the land initially only to demolish the freeway and restore the river, and San Diego purchased the site originally to house a public library. In all cases, outright ownership of the land was the best method for ensuring control over the redevelopment process, especially given the length of time development can take.

Less comprehensive redevelopment can occur without acquiring property, but generally not on the scale of Tualatin Commons and large-scale downtown areas like Suisun City and central Boca Raton, where a large portion of the costs are allocated to infrastructure. However, redevelopment of existing structures can be accomplished without ownership by enforcing design guidelines as demonstrated at The Crossings and The Village at Shirlington. Providing funding for improvements such as historic facade

renovation and building adaptive reuse also help. Agreements can be drafted between the community, landowner, and/or developer to implement redevelopment which best meets all stakeholders' interests.

Acting as public developer also means working with other community, state, and federal agencies to reduce redundancy and ensure all legal requirements are met. Simply acting as a coordinator between, for example, the public works and transportation departments ensures that when a road is scheduled for repairs, aging sewer lines that run beneath it can be replaced as part of the road construction process instead of three weeks after. Coordination results in saved time and money, as well as reduced frustration.

For example, Arlington's planning agency and the developers worked with other departments within the city and county to effectively coordinate new placement of utility infrastructure--telephone and electric lines below ground--as well as develop agreements for shared parking between uses.<sup>21</sup> The City of Mountain View, on the other hand, is working diligently with the California Department of Transportation to move a CalTrain heavy commuter line station to a site adjacent to The Crossings.<sup>22</sup>

The public developer also needs to recognize and effectively deal with barriers--and there may be many depending on the project.

Perhaps the largest barrier will be local citizens who question why the city is acting in a development role at all. Coordination with the structured citizens group, as well as an overall approach for community involvement, can help alleviate such opposition. Moreover, information that explains the many values of the redevelopment (i.e., marketing), especially as opposed to the costs of current sprawl development, can pack a powerful punch.<sup>23</sup>

It is surprising, perhaps, that there was no large neighborhood opposition--in the form of NIMBYism (Not In My Back Yard)--to the proposed redevelopments themselves once conceptual plans were finalized. In all cases it was clearly demonstrated and virtually unanimously accepted that changes were needed. Even in The Crossings, which did face initial opposition from nearby residents concerned about high densities and perceived adverse affects to local schools (in the neighboring City of Palo Alto, specifically), discussions with the residents alleviated their fears.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, serving as public developer may mean changing the



An agreement between Suisun City and the Army Corps of Engineers and state agencies provided for long-term viability of a navigable channel as well as adjacent wetlands. S. Buntin.

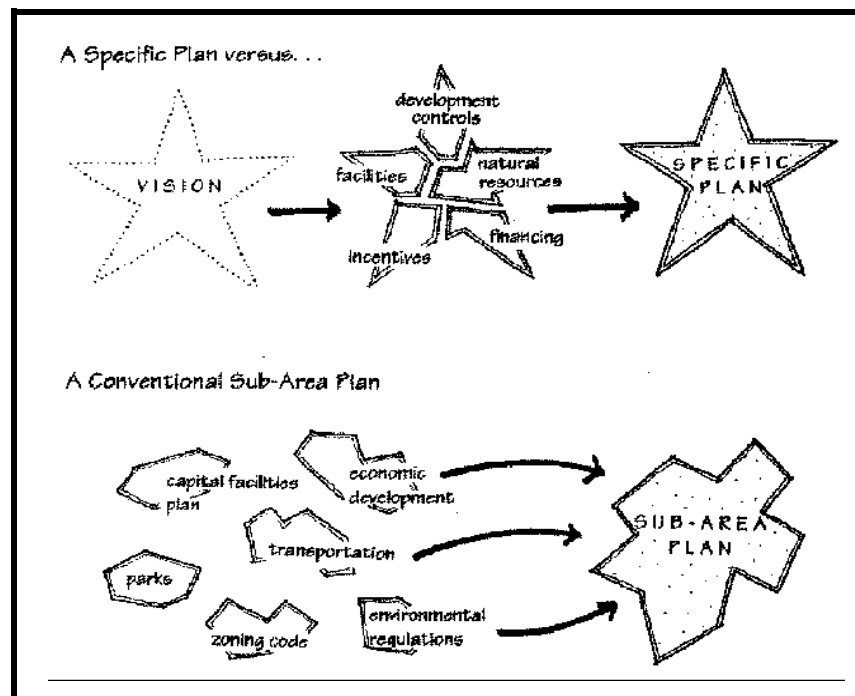
makeup of those entities which are in charge of or somehow involved with the redevelopment. For example, Suisun City merged the planning and housing agencies into the new Redevelopment Agency which has a distinct budget and reports directly to the City Council. The merger greatly increased efficiency and overall effectiveness.<sup>25</sup>

### **Step 6.     *Develop a specific redevelopment***

#### ***plan.***

A specific or precise plan is fundamental to redevelopment because it is the document which details everything from the vision and goals to design guidelines. Specifically (no pun intended), it “establishes an integrated master development plan for the entire sub-area with its own specific land-use zoning, street and infrastructure standards, design standards, and development regulations. This plan supplants general codes and standards, but must be consistent with the framework of the larger region’s comprehensive plan,” according to *Redevelopment for Livable Communities*.<sup>26</sup> It is essential that the plan be initiated early in the redevelopment process, generally in conjunction with the hiring of a design team, to ensure adequate development. Often, it begins even before, led by the planning agency and built upon community involvement.

As Suisun City and Tualatin demonstrate, it is often developed in a collaborative effort between the city, design team, citizens (either the structured group or through overall community involvement), and even the developer. Like the redevelopment project itself, it is a dynamic entity which may require revision



**A Specific Plan versus a Conventional Sub-Area Plan.** Snohomish Transportation Authority.

periodically. Specific analyses--such as marketing, financial, and environmental impact studies, may or may not be contained within the plan (except in California, where some of these analyses are required by law to be in the specific plan).<sup>27</sup> Part of its strength lies in its flexibility.

The *Suisun City Amended Downtown Specific Plan* is “a direct interpretation of the community’s goals integrated with the



**The Leland Consulting Group came up with the idea for constructing a lake to raise adjacent land and provide a valuable amenity at Tualatin Commons.** S. Buntin.

financial constraints of the project area.”<sup>28</sup> Tualatin took a bit of a different approach. It does not have one specific plan, but rather utilizes the amended *Tualatin Central Urban Renewal Plan*, separate design guidelines developed specifically for Tualatin Commons, and the ten citizen’s objectives. Mountain View uses the *San Antonio Station Precise Plan* for The Crossings, while Portland uses the more general *Central City Plan* for guidance for RiverPlace.

### **Step 7.     *Develop a comprehensive financing scheme.***

Large-scale redevelopment often will not occur without public funds. But the mechanisms for raising those funds, and tapping into other sources, are varied and warrant detailed research by the redeveloping community.

Suisun City, Tualatin, Mizner Park, and Uptown District used tax increment financing in one form or another. Because Suisun City was classified as a redevelopment area, and Tualatin as an urban renewal area, for example, both legally qualified to implement the tax increment financing mechanism. With tax increment financing, property taxes are frozen in the redevelopment area, and the community issues bonds based on the amount of funding it will need for redevelopment. Redevelopment increases the economic activity in the area, and therefore increases redeveloped property values. The suburb uses the tax increment--the monetary difference between the old and new property, sales, or other tax amounts--to pay off the bonds, plus interest. As time goes by, the tax increment increases as economic activity in the redeveloped area increases.

In many places, including California and Colorado, the tax increment increases are funded primarily by the commercial and industrial sectors, so the effect of tax increment financing on low-

income housing, and therefore cultural diversity, is minimal.

Additionally, cities can utilize funds from other sources to help finance studies and other projects, such as Suisun City's train depot and marina, Tualatin Commons's public arts plan, the relocation of the CalTrain station at The Crossings, and river restoration at RiverPlace.

There are a variety of other financing options available. The Center for Livable Communities, in *A Policymaker's Guide to Transit-Oriented Development*, identifies several options in addition to tax increment financing:<sup>29</sup>

- For transit-oriented redevelopments, the metropolitan planning organization--such as Metro in Portland and the Denver Regional Council of Governments in Denver--can provide ***federal transportation funding***. Funds are available for a variety of transit-related activities under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991.
- ***State housing and community development funds***, which are in turn funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, can be used. Programs include Community Development Block Grants, Home Investment Partnerships, Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS, and Emergency Shelter Grants. Additionally, the Low-Income Tax Credit Program provides tax credits for investments in low-income housing construction.
- ***Historic preservation tax credits*** for renovation of historic buildings. Buildings within a city- or county-designated

historic district are eligible.

- *A public-private partnership can be set up by utilizing joint development* to share costs, as was done at Mizner Park and RiverPlace. This alternative is discussed in further detail under Step 12.
- *Special assessment districts*, which are used to fund public improvements in specific areas, can be established. They require property owners to pay according to the benefit they receive. The City of Boulder, for example, used this mechanism to fund construction of the pedestrian-oriented Pearl Street Mall.
- The *general fund* can be used if money is available and the redevelopment project is expected to increase revenues in the long run. Though Tualatin used tax increment financing to purchase the land originally, it used funds only from its general account reserves to pay for all work on Tualatin Commons, including construction of the lake, promenade, and supporting infrastructure.
- *Grants and local donations from organizations* such as foundations and state and federal agencies, as well as local organizations like the Chamber of Commerce, downtown business association, local chapter of the American Institute of Architects, and others, can be pursued. Additionally, the public can be involved in raising funds. The “sale” of bricks with personal names engraved on them, for example, has helped finance Portland’s Pioneer Square and Denver’s Coors Field and surrounding improvements. Ultimately, the wise community develops a comprehensive

financing scheme based on an evaluation of all financial options.

### **Step 8. Hire a quality design team.**

“As with any successful venture,” says Tualatin’s Economic Development Director Janet Young, “choosing the right players is critical. Selection of a prominent team of consultants who had much relevant experience and who worked well together resulted in creative, productive (and fun!) planning sessions.”<sup>30</sup>

City staff, with few exceptions, are often not skilled or experienced enough to conduct all of the necessary studies and prepare conceptual designs for the redevelopment. The purpose of a design team is to work with city staff in undertaking technical analyses and evaluations, developing options and the final plan for the site, and perhaps even managing much of the redevelopment process. But even if city staff are skilled in these areas, a non-biased design team can provide insight that might otherwise be missed, serving a crucial ongoing role. Selection of a respectable, experienced, and competent team that works well together is therefore essential.

Suisun City selected the Roma Design Group and Halycon Limited to prepare the *Redevelopment Concept Plan* and the downtown’s design guidelines in 1990, respectively.<sup>22</sup> As part of that, other feasibility analyses were performed. Tualatin assembled a design team led by Leland Consulting Group that developed a

preliminary concept plan, performed analyses, and participated in overall management of the development process. Similarly, a design team was used in the development of Uptown District. The team began site plan development by reviewing older San Diego neighborhoods for design characteristics worth incorporating into the redevelopment.<sup>31</sup>

The design team should perform a number of analyses in order to best determine the uses for a redeveloped area. At a minimum, the studies should include a market analysis and financial analysis. Additional studies, such as a transportation and environmental analyses, may be appropriate. The team should also develop a number of concept plans for redevelopment, revising those based on city and citizen input, as appropriate. It should develop the final site plan and any background documentation. Any additional work, such as development of design guidelines and large portions of the specific plan, may be reasonable tasks, as well.

### ***Step 9. Conduct an environmental review.***

Environmental review warrants additional discussion because the redevelopment is based on the natural and built environments. The community, through the design team or other means, should conduct a review of environmental constraints and opportunities for the site. The review may be less formal, and therefore integrated into

other methodology steps including development of community indicators, use of a specific redevelopment plan, and use of a design team. Or it may be a formal environmental impact analysis, now required by many states. California, for example, mandates development of an environmental impact report for any project that affects the state or utilizes state funding.<sup>32</sup> The EIR not only identifies potential negative environmental impacts from redevelopment, it also highlights opportunities for enhancing resource conservation and environmental preservation. The EIR conducted by the City of Mountain View for The Crossings redevelopment project, for example, identified the opportunity to recycle concrete and other materials from the previous shopping mall building into the foundations and porches of new homes.<sup>33</sup>

A less intense analysis is the Phase II environmental analysis to check for hazardous and toxic contaminants onsite. Such assessments were performed by Tualatin and Portland for their respective redevelopment projects. None were identified for Tualatin, but were for RiverPlace.

Environmental analyses should not be performed solely because they may be required by law, however. A thorough review can both mitigate future problems by discovering them early in the redevelopment process, and identify those natural environmental



**Protecting the diversity of the Suisun Marsh is of utmost importance for citizens of Suisun City.** S. Buntin.

areas and species that are most sensitive and which therefore most warrant protection. Ultimately, a good analysis allows the community to ask, as has Wendell Berry, “What is here? What will nature permit us to do here? What will nature help us to do here?”<sup>34</sup>

The comprehensiveness of the environmental review will be dictated largely by the redevelopment project itself. For suburban downtowns and areas that are already built, and where natural environmental amenities are not a factor, a discussion by developers, the city, citizens, and environmental experts may be adequate. During the redevelopment process, environmental impacts and

opportunities can be reviewed. For redevelopment projects that obviously have a much larger impact--Suisun City and RiverPlace, for instance--the environmental analysis should include much more detail. The following types of information should be found in the most comprehensive environmental reviews:<sup>35</sup>

#### **Natural Resources**

- **Resources:** Opportunities for protection of natural landscapes and species, renewable resource use and development, and waste minimization reduction and reuse.
- **Land:** Geology, soils, landforms, ridgelines, slopes, scenic values.
- **Water:** Surface and groundwater, drainage conditions, tidal and nontidal wetlands delineation.
- **Vegetation:** Vegetative types and conditions, tree stand delineation, opportunities for local food production.
- **Wildlife:** Habitats and endangered species.
- **Climate:** Macro- and microconditions, air quality, noise considerations.

#### **Manmade Features**

- **Buildings:** Existing structures and uses, outbuildings, foundations, and opportunities for “green” construction

- **Transportation:** Road network, transit systems, parking facilities, bicycle and pedestrian paths, and trails.
- **Infrastructure:** Sewage, water supply, schools, other utilities, and easements.

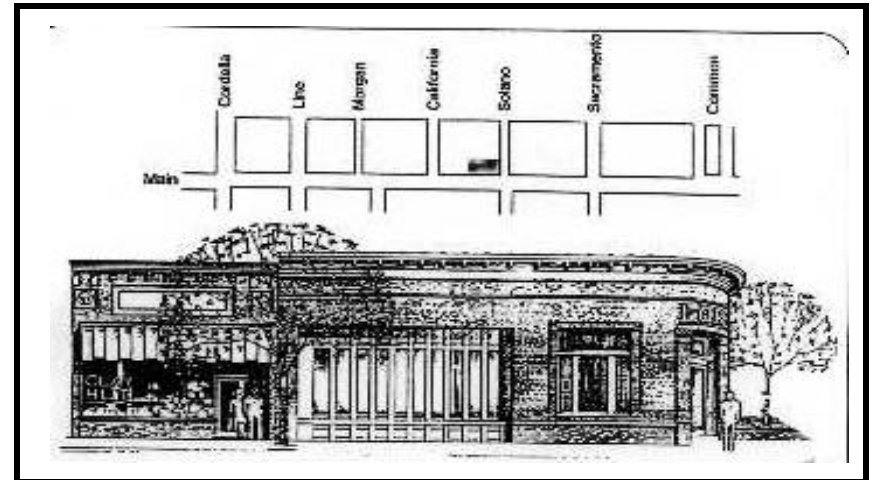
### Cultural Factors

- **Social influence:** Neighboring uses, historic and archeological values, community attitudes.
- **Political and legal constraints:** Environmental regulations.
- **Economic:** Off-site improvements.

The environmental review should ultimately be tailored to the individual community.

### **Step 10. Develop stringent but workable design guidelines.**

Design guidelines may or may not be integrated with a specific redevelopment plan, but they are the teeth of the



**Suisun City's design standards and guidelines suggest rehabilitation concepts such as this for historic buildings already along Main Street.** Suisun City Amended Downtown Specific Plan.

redevelopment process that ensure renovation and construction are appropriate. They are especially beneficial when either preserving historic structures, and working to implement redevelopment that complements rather than takes away from these structures; or when the entire redevelopment project consists primarily of new buildings constructed to implement an overall vision, theme, or architectural style. The former applies to Suisun City, and the latter to all other case studies.

The Tualatin Commons design guidelines, for example, are “performance-oriented and not prescriptive. They address issues

regarding the look, feel, and function of Tualatin Commons. They create an environment for design excellence to occur, for small actions to have a major cumulative effect, and for ongoing ‘reality’ checks to see if the vision portrayed in the Tualatin Commons plan is being accomplished. If the guidelines are properly followed, each and every development increment will contribute to a better defined and coordinated Tualatin Commons.”<sup>36</sup> Development proposals are then reviewed by the Tualatin Development Commission, Architectural Review Board, and the city’s Planning Department, as appropriate.

Design guidelines ultimately serve three purposes:<sup>37</sup>

- To provide prospective developers and designers with a checklist of issues that must be addressed in their development proposals.
- To provide existing businesses and landowners with an overall conceptual approach that will enable the actions of independent businesses and landowners to be in concert with and add to the specific plan.
- To provide the community with a method of evaluating public and private development or redevelopment proposals on a consistent basis.

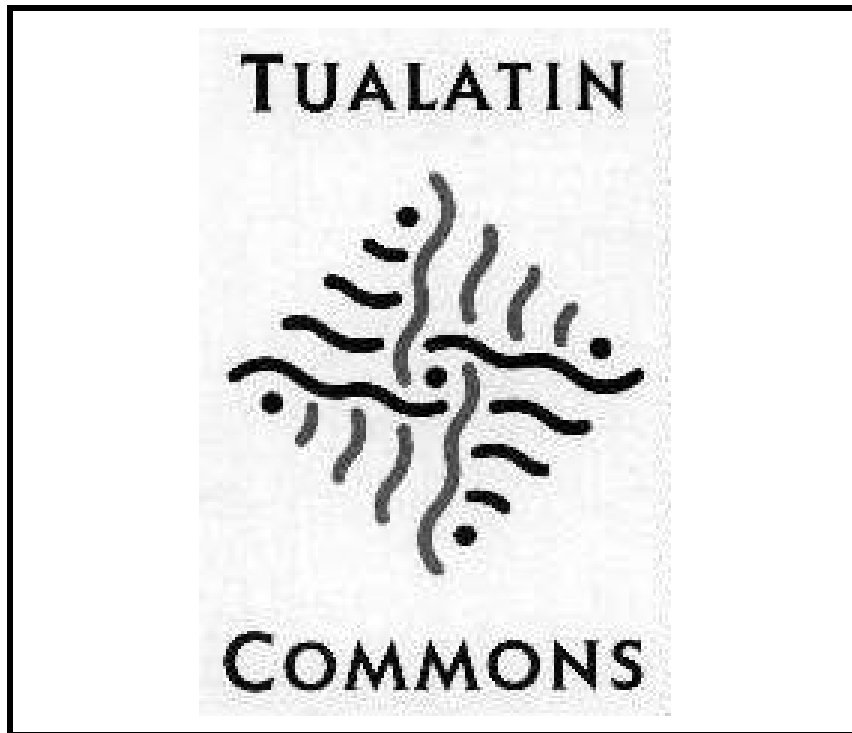
For manufacturers and vendors, marketing is the lifeline to successful sales. Big and small corporations alike spend sizable percentages of their overall revenues on advertising and other efforts to ensure that consumers know about their products. And while advertising may be to blame for many of society’s ills--Joe Camel billboards and magazine ads increasing smoking among youths, Jeep television commercials increasing off-road driving and damage to sensitive ecosystems, and U.S. Homes and other builder Sunday newspaper advertising sections promoting ownership of low-density homes leading to sprawl--these same examples demonstrate the power of effective marketing.

In order for a redevelopment to be sustainable--especially economically and socially--it must be marketed. Tualatin’s Economic Development Department, for instance, hired Lane Advertising & Public Relations to both keep the public informed and gauge community attitudes, and also to market the project and individual parcels to prospective developers.<sup>38</sup> Mechanisms available for community education include press releases, press kits, media interviews, flyers, World Wide Web sites, and articles in city newsletters and newspapers. Marketing for private developers can include mailings to prospective developers, real estate brokers, and bankers; project updates released on a regular basis; and market

### ***Step 11. Develop a marketing plan.***

studies used to determine the best uses for individual parcels.

Though Tualatin's efforts were successful in attracting developers, they have waned regarding citizen use of the site since the public portions and infrastructure were completed. The city's



**The Tualatin Commons logo represents water, trees, and the heart of the city, and is a useful marketing piece.** Tualatin Development Commission.

Economic Development Director desires additional marketing efforts aimed at bringing residents into the site, but does not now have the

resources.<sup>39</sup>

Suisun City, on the other hand, has used only the resources of its Redevelopment Agency to market.<sup>40</sup> Despite these efforts, the city would like to undertake more aggressive marketing mechanisms, such as through an advertising and public relations firm, but has not yet done so.<sup>41</sup>

Marketing efforts of other projects are varied. Mountain View and Arlington did not participate in marketing efforts, while Mizner Park, Uptown District, and RiverPlace conducted extensive request for bids processes and utilize logos and other measures to market to residents and tourists alike.

Development of a marketing plan with an analysis of necessary advertising and public involvement actions for both the suburb's residents and its prospective developers and other stakeholders can be highly beneficial. Marketing the project to both developers and users begins far before redevelopment is complete, and lasts long after the last space is leased and filled.

In its simplest sense, a marketing plan accomplishes six objectives, according to Frederick D. Jarvis, author of *Site Planning and Community Design for Great Neighborhoods*.<sup>42</sup>

**Gathering the facts** includes investigating market trends and undertaking overall project and specific parcel market and financial

feasibility studies. These are often conducted by the design team. Gathering data allows the community to develop a clear set of marketing objectives from the outset, and to know its market and citizen base.

*Getting organized* includes development of a marketing strategy oriented at the local level and, as appropriate, at regional and national levels, as well. An organized approach to marketing the redevelopment allows the community to identify the need for specialists--such as wetlands mitigation specialists and historic preservation specialists--and to bring them in at the beginning of the process.

*Believing in the project* means championing the redevelopment and then using eye-catching graphic exhibits and logos, examples, and comparative studies to sell redevelopment concepts. Communities should present positive solutions and back them up with easily understandable information, examples, and expert testimony.

*Promoting and marketing the redevelopment project* requires a complete understanding of the advantages of the project, as well as promotion of the redevelopment's attributes to prospective developers, lending institutions, Realtors, other city staff, local politicians, civic groups, and the community in general. Additionally,

an understanding of the project's weaknesses and beneficial solutions to those, if necessary, will allow the community to negate criticism and opposition.

*Promoting the project and its new uses persistently* means not giving up on marketing efforts. Selling and other aspects of redevelopment are reiterative processes. A constant flow of information and marketing pieces ensures that the community, potential residents, tourists and other visitors, and the development community are aware of the project, and know its benefits.

*Ensuring community and developer satisfaction* can be done by keeping community members informed, responding to their concerns, involving them where possible, and keeping their collective best interests--economically, environmentally, and socially--in mind; and by easing processes for developers, providing them with adequate information, responding to their concerns, and working with them in evaluating outcomes of redevelopment projects that have both specific developer and overall societal impacts.

The value in establishing a marketing plan is that the city comes to truly know its community and the development market, the possibilities for redeveloping the site, and mechanisms for ensuring redevelopment use and success for the long term. The value in

implementing the plan is that the project will be economically and socially successful: it will be popular among residents and visitors.

**Step 12. *Work with private developers in an efficient public-private partnership.***

The old phrase that time is money is perhaps most applicable to developers, who pay interest on money borrowed to purchase parcels, design the actual buildings and adjacent areas, and undertake construction. The longer developers have to wait to receive approval for and then complete construction, the more it costs. And they will therefore have less funding available for amenities that increase potential for sustainability, such as street furniture, landscaping, and building efficiency. It is imperative to work with private developers in an efficient public-private partnership, especially when the agency in charge of redevelopment takes on a role as public developer itself.

In addition to reduced costs because the city owns and maintains infrastructure, parking, and landscaping, Suisun City offers



**Suisun City offers enterprise zone incentives to developers and business owners who construct mixed-use buildings such as Babs Delta Diner in Harbor Plaza.** S. Buntin.

developers its enterprise zone incentive programs to facilitate development of redevelopment sites.<sup>43</sup>

Similarly, the Boca Raton Community Redevelopment Agency has worked closely with local developer Tom Crocker to implement a use that meets the city's goal of "a downtown where people can work, play, and live."<sup>44</sup> When Crocker bought the site and originally wanted to demolish the mall, add infrastructure, and sell the site to commercial developers, the redevelopment agency encouraged his firm to build the site itself and retain responsibility for

leasing it. The redevelopment agency, in return, agreed to purchase the land and lease it back to Crocker to both construct and operate Mizner Park. There are four general mechanisms for facilitating a productive public-private partnership: financial incentives, streamlined development process, dialogue between developers and the community, and joint development.

In addition to funding all or part of the costs of new and improved infrastructure, waiving development and licence fees, and providing design and related assistance at a reduced or no cost, suburbs implementing redevelopment projects can offer other financial incentives that help developers and which therefore promote a public-private partnership.<sup>45</sup> The community can assist with project financing by using city or county funds, tax increment financing, bond revenues, federal funds, and other sources. It can assist the developer in obtaining financing through tax-exempt bonds, loan guarantees, and letters of credit. It can also provide tax waivers and reduced impact fees.

And the community can help subsidize the retail component of mixed-use redevelopment projects until the retail portion becomes profitable. According to the Center for Livable Communities, “Sometimes in catalyst mixed-use projects, it may be necessary to build the retail portion early in the project’s life, to ensure the

project’s success with commercial and/or residential tenants. However, prior to buildout or in the early years, subsidies may be needed to guarantee the presence of retailers in what would otherwise be vacant store fronts, especially in cases where the other rents or leases cannot subsidize the retail space.”<sup>46</sup>

Still other financial incentives include offering density bonuses to allow developers to increase density and therefore profit, as well as providing flexibility in building codes so that developers can reuse or invent spaces that benefit the project and which earn them a higher profit margin.

The simplest and perhaps most effective action a community can take in working with developers is to streamline the development process.<sup>47</sup> Streamlining mechanisms include revising zoning codes to increase certainty in the permit process; providing priority permit processing for developers involved with the redevelopment project; creating “by-right” zones which ensure permit issuance if the developer demonstrates up front that all “by-right” zone guidelines have been met; and making the permitting process more efficient by (1) providing agency assistance to developers in the permitting process, (2) consolidating permit processes, (3) clarifying conflicting requirements and reducing the number of guidelines to one specific set, (4) holding a single public hearing for all approvals, and (5)

reducing the number of permit and design review approval levels.

Authentic two-way dialogue between developers and the community--the redevelopment site's residents and neighbors--is the key to success of redevelopment projects, according to a developer of Uptown District.<sup>48</sup> In the process, the developer actively listens to citizens and tries to incorporate their ideas into the redevelopment, while also telling these "citizen planners" which ideas do not make sense from economic, environmental, cultural, and political perspectives, and why. They work together to explore a variety of options to achieve the goal of long-term success. The suburb's redevelopment agency can help facilitate this dialogue by bringing the developer and residents together through processes and organizations already in place, as well as by creating new opportunities.

Joint development is another process for working with developers, and indeed represents a true public-private partnership. Under this scenario, the developer and one or more public agencies, such as a municipality and transit agency, form a planning and financial partnership to redevelop a site.<sup>49</sup> For example, Contra Costa County, El Cerrito Redevelopment Agency, and a private developer formed a joint partnership to produce the mixed-use Del Norte Place redevelopment adjacent to a Bay Area Rapid Transit station in El Cerrito, California--a suburb of Oakland.<sup>50</sup> The

redevelopment agency issued \$3 million in redevelopment bonds to finance land acquisition, the developer provided \$7 million in equity financing, and the county provided permanent funding in the form of \$11 million in tax-exempt, multifamily housing bonds. Additionally, the agencies worked together in creating and implementing the design.

### ***Step 13. Develop and implement an evaluation mechanism.***

The only way to truly account for redevelopment success is to measure it. And the best way to measure it is to use indicators developed from pre-established baselines. Development of indicators of community sustainability is discussed in detail in Step 4, as well as Chapter 3.

A number of resources are already tapped for measuring success: pre- and post-marketing analyses, U.S. Census data, annual sales and rent/lease figures, wildlife counts, crime statistics, pedestrian counts, automobile emissions readings, permeable surface area evaluations, and many more. But a comprehensive set of



**A plan incorporating indicators of sustainability could help the City of Tualatin gauge Tualatin Commons's success in areas such as water use, reduction, and reuse.** S. Buntin.

indicators measured on a regular basis, and a readable, usable public report based on evaluation results, are necessary to gauge economic, environmental, and social progress of the redevelopment and to make adjustments accordingly.

Development and implementation of an evaluation mechanism--such as an evaluation plan--allows the community to establish policy and procedures for actually collecting the data, analyzing it, presenting it to political leaders and the general public, and most importantly acting upon it to make changes necessary to

enhance the redevelopment's livability. As with other portions of the redevelopment process, it should begin early in the process and involve the community in helping to define relevant evaluation criteria.

"The indicators a society chooses to report to itself about itself are surprisingly powerful," says Sustainable Seattle's Donella H. Meadows. "They reflect collective values and inform collective decisions. A nation that keeps a watchful eye on its salmon runs or the safety of its streets makes different choices than does a nation that is only paying attention to its GNP. The idea of citizens choosing their own indicators is something new under the sun--something intensely democratic."<sup>51</sup>

Evaluating the sustainability of a project, community, or region is both new and relatively rare. None of the projects studied utilize community indicators to measure success, though all could undoubtedly benefit by their use. Rather than saying "It appears that more people are in downtown now, and they are happy," the cities could use quantitative indicators to measure real success: the number of pedestrians at different times of the day, week, and year; retail sales before and after redevelopment, and then measured annually; attendance at festivals; subjective rankings of specific areas through a survey instrument completed by residents; etc. The data from

these indicators can then be analyzed, put into a report or other informative, readable, and available format, and used as a basis for continuing, revising, or discontinuing current programs, as well as developing new ones.

For example, in 1985, a community group worked with city leaders and the general public in Chattanooga, Tennessee, to initiate the *Vision 2000* process, which set 40 goals for improving the city over the following fifteen years.<sup>52</sup> In 1993, the city led an effort to update its goals through *Re-Vision 2000*. The update was based upon a self assessment conducted in 1992 to evaluate its progress in meeting those goals. From that evaluation process, the city developed 27 new goals with 120 specific recommendations in five general categories.<sup>53</sup>

The ongoing evaluation details key areas of success, as well as failures and break-even points. For example, the evaluation mechanism allowed Chattanooga to learn that by switching from diesel to electric buses on its downtown shuttle routes, it avoided 600 pounds of particulate emissions, 2,900 pounds of carbon monoxide emissions, 10,800 pounds of NO<sub>x</sub> emissions, and 3.5 million pounds of carbon dioxide emissions in 1995 alone.<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile, the city's electric bus manufacturer supports 35 resident jobs and shuttle-system retail development has generated \$800,000 in city and county

tax revenues.

The most appropriate evaluation mechanism appears to be a plan that contains the following elements:

- Evaluation goals.
- Overview of sustainability indicators (or other measures).



**In Suisun City, the waterfront is the place to be now because citizens have access to it for the first time in 50 years.** S. Buntin.

- Discussion of process for using the indicators to measure progress.
- Detailed list and review of each indicator, selection of a

baseline for each indicator, and a discussion of how each applies to the overall goals.

Each year, or other period as deemed appropriate by the community, a community self assessment should be conducted that is based on the evaluation plan. In addition to the above information, it should contain the following:

- A review of each indicator that quantitatively demonstrates that year's measure, and a comparison to the baseline and/or previous years' measures (as applicable).
- Recommendations based on the results of that year's indicators, including steps to counteract any negative trends, suggestions for changing the indicators and/or data sources if necessary to more adequately gauge progress, and an evaluation of known or predicted future events that will affect the indicators.
- Specific policy changes and actions that will be undertaken based on the results of the indicators.
- Opportunity for review and input by political leaders, stakeholders, and the general public.

#### ***Step 14. Promote the redeveloped downtown as the place to be.***

After the redevelopment process has occurred and

revitalization and construction are complete, it is altogether too easy for the redevelopment agency, structured citizens' groups, and other stakeholders to let their involvement slide or even cease. Yet the biggest challenge for the community may not be actually getting people to the redeveloped site in the first place--for there will likely be well-advertised festivities for the "grand opening"--but rather getting people to return--getting people, moreover, in the habit of frequenting the new city core. While this is not an issue for Mizner Park, Suisun City and Tualatin both demonstrate that the challenge can be formidable.

It is therefore important to incorporate continual promotion efforts into the marketing and evaluation plans, as well as through real-time avenues: the community newsletter, newspapers, magazines, schools, offsite public gatherings, sports events, civic groups, business meetings, "brown bag" luncheons, and others.

Ensuring that the redevelopment meets the properties of sustainability (either the fourteen listed in Chapter 3, or others developed by the community itself) will help facilitate use. Integration with the surrounding neighborhood, specifically, will provide the opportunity for neighboring residents to use the public spaces, take advantage of recreational and entertainment opportunities, and frequent redeveloped retail and other business.

A strong belief by community leaders that the redevelopment is the place to be is perhaps the best mechanism for ensuring successful use, for such a belief is contagious. Their demonstrated use of the site, as well as adequate marketing, public visibility, and access to the site, will help ensure that the redeveloped downtown or city center is the place to be today and far into the future.

There are numerous other opportunities for ensuring redevelopment success, most of which are discovered as the project progresses, incorporated as practical. The fourteen steps presented in the Sustainable Suburban Downtown Redevelopment Methodology are those more general steps which ensure the community is fully aware of its options and implements them accordingly, the public is involved, developers can and will participate, and the built and natural environments are restored, protected, and enhanced. They provide the redevelopment its greatest chances for both short- and long-term success.

These steps should then be coupled with larger suburban actions that make non-sustainable development a non-option. Such actions include limiting subsidies for sprawl by raising the true costs of developing on greenfield, peripheral sites through such mechanisms as impact fees, and participation in a regional organization for managing metropolitan growth. Regional

approaches include development of a regional growth plan, revenue sharing, elastic urban growth boundaries, regional transit development, and a host of other items. The redeveloped downtown ensures sustainability is fostered at the local level; it takes all communities to reach a consensus for sustainability at the regional level.

## **Barriers to Suburban Downtown Redevelopment**

Suburban communities can learn much from these examples: the values of visioning, community involvement, good physical design, and effective marketing high on that list. But one of the most valuable lessons for others may well be how the suburbs effectively deal with barriers. Indeed, it has been their ability to craft deals, patiently wait, urge support, and try again and again that breaks down the barriers and brings ultimate success. Of course, each is still working, and barriers may continue to present themselves, but their

### Major Barriers to Sustainable Suburban Downtown Redevelopment

1. Community opposition
2. Short time constraints
3. Developer resistance
4. Assembling land and constructing infrastructure
5. Poor real estate market
6. Difficulties in securing financing
7. Maintaining a critical mass of purchasers and users
8. Integration with surrounding neighborhoods
9. Implementing “green” construction, including recycled materials, energy efficiency and renewable energy, and water and wastewater reduction
10. Integrating mass transit
11. Integrating affordable housing
12. Building reuse and preservation
13. Zoning, covenants, and other legal restrictions
14. Obtaining political approval and keeping suburb leaders informed

successes in the past lend even more strength for overcoming new challenges that may arise.

While the outcomes certainly outweigh the risks, especially when taken in a long-term perspective, redevelopment is not a simple task. There are many formidable barriers. The recognition of these challenges can help suburban communities redevelop, countering sprawl in the creation of a community that equitably preserves the

built and natural environments, cultural heritages, and economic opportunities.

The largest single barrier may be *opposition from local residents*. The citizens of Suisun City, for example, were initially skeptical that the redevelopment would work because recent history did not encourage them to think otherwise. Suisun City was at the bottom of the Bay Area barrel when redevelopment began. Though there was nowhere to go but up, there was also no reason to believe that “up” would actually happen, at least at the beginning. It was not until physical changes began--the new Civic Center, removal of slum housing in the Crescent neighborhood, removal of dilapidated oil facilities on the waterfront--that people began to believe. As their faith increased, so did their support.

Both Suisun City and Tualatin faced citizens who felt that the “public developer” role was not the proper one for the suburbs to take. But efforts to redevelop the sites using a single private developer consistently failed. Moreover, allowing the private market simply to do as it would almost guaranteed a result of more sprawl development, in these cases. Even after accepting the public developer role, the cities had to work closely with developers to ensure they would meet their non-sprawl criteria, including pedestrian orientation and mixed uses. While some of the projects discussed

previously were not public developments, they all involved considerable interaction between the city and developers.

Community opposition was effectively halted on the public developer objection in two ways. First, the communities provided information in the form of public hearings, workshops, and other means that kept citizens informed during the entire process--indeed, they solicited ideas and worked directly with structured citizens groups. Information demonstrated that in order for the cities and their residents to undertake viable redevelopment, they had to take active roles. Second, a group of concerned citizens formed on its own to help push through the redevelopment. Finding a group of strong support in the community, with citizens who will attend meetings and speak up, is highly beneficial, as Tualatin Commons and Uptown District demonstrate.

Citizens also raised *concerns about the time it took to redevelop sites*. Though the actual processes for developing the *Specific Plan*, in Suisun City's case, and developing a conceptual plan after Development Commission approval in Tualatin's case were relatively quick, in residents' eyes the redevelopment process moved quite slowly. Redevelopment began in Suisun City in 1982. The first plan was never implemented because it was not feasible. Changes did not occur for seven years, when the *Plan* was revised. Today some

residents feel the process is moving too slowly, as well, for only a handful of businesses have moved into such areas as Harbor Plaza.

For Tualatin, two developers pulled out after they were unable to find anchor retail for what then was called Village Square. There was a span of seven years, as well, between the time the city began purchasing land and when construction began on the lake and other public infrastructure and amenities.



**Mass transit is a viable option in Suisun City with the restored train depot.** S. Buntin.

A review of other redevelopment projects shows that the processes are by nature relatively long. The Crossings took three

years from the publication of the *Precise Plan* to the beginning of construction, in fall of 1994. Construction still continues, and the transit stop has yet to be moved. The Village at Shirlington also took three years from initiation to construction of the first phase. Later phases are ongoing as well.

The processes at Mizner Park and Uptown District both lasted five years, from purchase of property to completion of construction. While RiverPlace only took two years from approval to completed construction for the first phases, construction on newer phases is still underway. Additionally, the site sat “dormant,” though surrounded by landscaped parks, for twenty years before RiverPlace was proposed.

Alleviating long development processes can be difficult, but involving citizens and developers from the beginning should help.

Even when emphasizing public-private partnerships, *working with developers* can be a barrier. They may be resistant to implementing sustainable ideas because they are unsure of outcomes, as in Suisun City and initially at The Crossings. They are then likely to need prompting through education, financial incentives, and positive press. Developers may also try to take shortcuts--generally not the case with these projects. Effective design guidelines, periodic city inspections, and honest relations between the city and developer

can help alleviate this barrier.

*Assembling land and constructing new infrastructure and amenities* can be a barrier because owners may be reluctant to sell either at all or for a price the suburb is willing to pay. Downtown areas typically are comprised of high-price land, and suburban downtowns are no exception. Additionally, relocating businesses and residents, if necessary, can be politically and financially costly. There may also be environmental liability associated with the property, as well as many other barriers. Effective alleviation of these barriers calls for information dissemination, direct community involvement, agreements with developers, and strong political leadership.

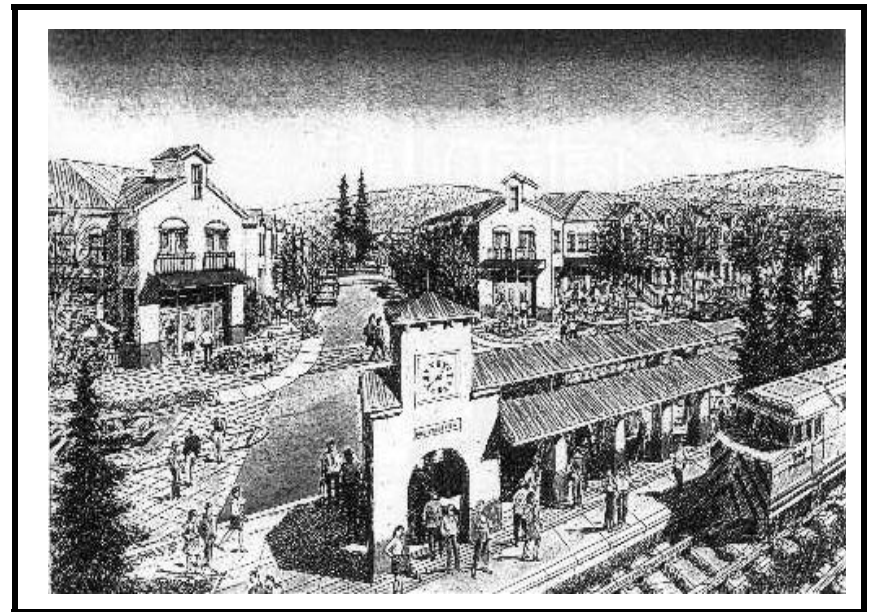
Co-development opportunities can also be utilized to reduce costs for cities and developers. Private developers and non-profit organizations are funding nearly eighty percent of the total cost of redeveloping Chattanooga’s downtown, for example.

*A poor real estate market*, or a market that otherwise does not appear appropriate for redevelopment, can be a large barrier. However, public ownership of land generally allows the suburb to consider uses over a long period, and may allow it to hold land until the market improves. Even in poor markets, there appears to be some need--albeit minor--for uses. Because the redevelopment is pedestrian- and likely transit-oriented, incorporating a number of

other properties of sustainability, chances to succeed are enhanced. The prices will be similar, but the redevelopment will offer far more amenities, as with all case studies.

**Financing** may be a formidable challenge, as well. Either the community may not want to raise additional funds, and so have to rely on what is already available and/or what others can bring to the table, or it can raise funds through bonds and other mechanisms. Lenders are often reluctant to lend for projects that are not “conventional,” because success rates are less well known. However, as high-density, mixed-use redevelopments and similar projects become more and more popular, this aspect of the barrier will recede.

Development of a comprehensive financing scheme in which creative approaches to financing are pursued is the best approach for overcoming this barrier. Another possible approach is for the city not to involve itself as much in the project, letting the developer secure all of the financing. This happened at both The Crossings and The



**Train shelter and mixed-use plaza area concept at The Crossings.**  
Calthorpe Associates. Calthorpe Associates.

Village at Shirlington. However, redevelopment efforts the scale of downtowns appear to be too large and too important for the city not to take an active role.

Bringing people into the redeveloped area--*maintaining a critical mass of purchasers and users*--can also be a barrier. Whether through habit or simple reluctance, people may not frequent the redeveloped site. Since citizen use is of highest priority, a marketing approach can be developed to determine how best to attract people. Additionally, since the redevelopment is at the

suburb's core, it makes sense to host community and festival events onsite.

Physical design and onsite amenities, as well as other factors such as climate, contribute significantly to usage. The linear plaza of Mizner Park and the curving esplanade of RiverPlace, for instance, are enjoyable to stroll through and bring people back again and again.

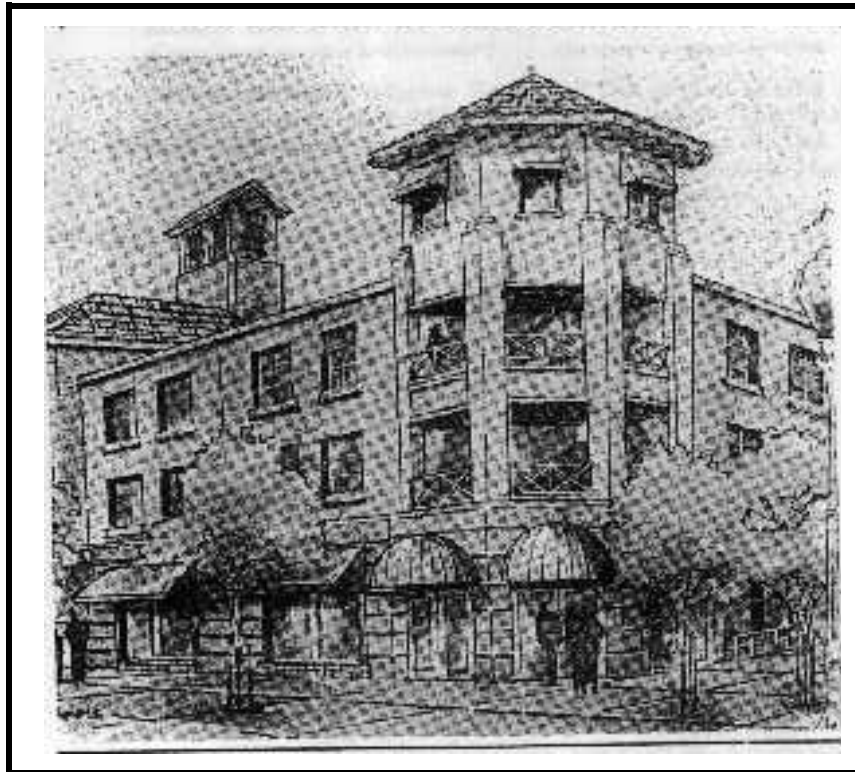
***Integrating the redevelopment effectively into surrounding neighborhoods*** can be a challenge, especially when these neighborhoods are automobile-oriented, or when single-use, such as residential. Careful site planning and community involvement, as well as good physical design and evaluation of converting adjacent sites, will help alleviate this challenge.

***Integrating “green” building approaches--recycled materials, energy efficiency and renewable energy, and water and wastewater reduction--***may be a barrier when markets are not providing the materials at a reasonable cost, and when builders are unfamiliar with implementation processes for these technologies. Close work with vendors, developers, architects, and builders can help, as can design guidelines and incentives for implementing these materials and processes. It may even be necessary for the community--either through the government itself or through local businesses--to start the industry locally. In Chattanooga, Tennessee,

for example, a local industry began manufacturing electric buses when the city decided to pursue their use and when a nearby, viable producer was not available. Additionally, Tualatin Commons, The Crossings, and The Village at Shirlington all recycled materials from older buildings into new onsite uses.

***Integrating viable mass transit options*** into the redevelopment can be a barrier as the costs of infrastructure are quite high, resident opposition may surface, and a regional approach is necessary. For example, Mountain View has found that reaching an agreement with the California Department of Transportation in moving the CalTrain station to The Crossings has taken longer than anticipated. Possible means of overcoming this barrier include environmental analyses, public education, regional coordination and collaboration, and public financing.

***Including affordable housing*** in the redevelopment can be a barrier. In some locations, such as Portland, it is required by law. In others, however, it is not required and the market may not “support” such uses. Public subsidies may be necessary, or provisions can be made offsite as long as all people have adequate

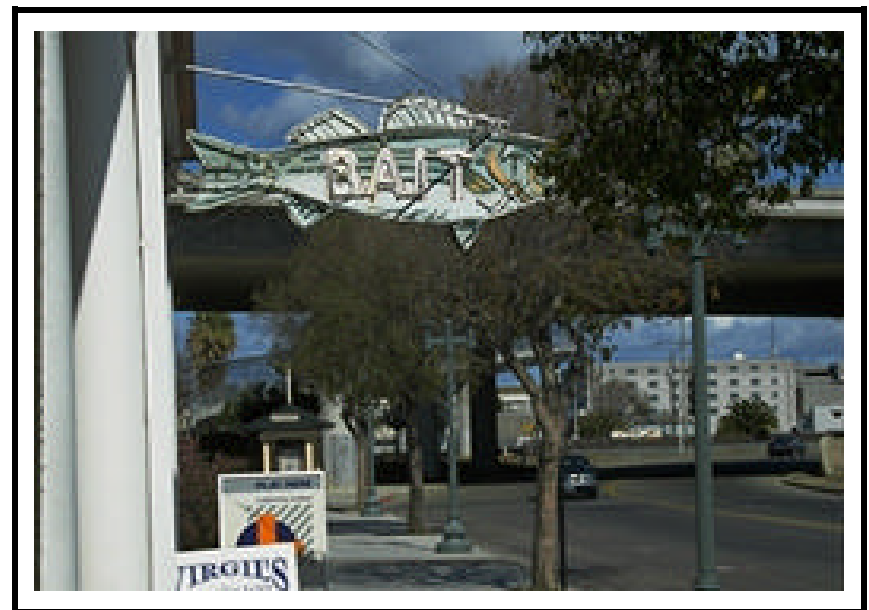


**Uptown District's distinct European flavor evolved from a mix of design characteristics in San Diego's oldest residential neighborhoods.** San Diego Daily Transcript.

access to the redevelopment's businesses and public spaces. The degree to which affordable housing, and indeed any property of sustainable redevelopment, is integrated into the redevelopment project depends on a number of circumstances, not the least of which is cost and ease of implementation. Successful redevelopment

projects, including Uptown District, The Crossings, RiverPlace, and Suisun City (by retaining several low-income multifamily units now adjacent to Victorian Harbor and the Civic Center) have incorporated affordable housing effectively, however.

*Building reuse and preservation* can be a challenge when the costs are high, when the buildings are not structurally sound, when they contain environmental hazards such as asbestos, and for other reasons. There are times, as with Tualatin and Mizner Park, when it



**Adaptive reuse of historic structures is combined with new infill on Suisun City's Main Street.** S. Buntin.

just does not make sense to reuse buildings. Involving the community to help identify those buildings that foster strong identity and cohesion is a good approach to determining buildings worth preserving, however. Design guidelines can help ensure that new buildings are appropriate. Meanwhile, if buildings cannot be saved, then they can be recycled into new structures and salvaged, as appropriate.

*Current regulations and zoning* can be a barrier, and in all likelihood will have to be changed unless the suburb already has progressive zoning ordinances in place, as with The Village at Shirlington and Arlington County, Virginia, and Tualatin to a degree. Barriers exist primarily when mixed-use redevelopment is attempted given normal, segregated zoning. When changed, redevelopment is in fact facilitated.

However, in relatively new suburbs in which downtown or city centers are restricted by *covenants and other legal restrictions*, the only way for cities to redevelop may be by agreement of all landowners, and/or by buying the covenant out and retiring it. There has been little success with efforts to overturn covenants through legal or other means.<sup>55</sup>

Finally, *obtaining political approval--and keeping key political leaders informed*--can be a barrier. It is imperative that

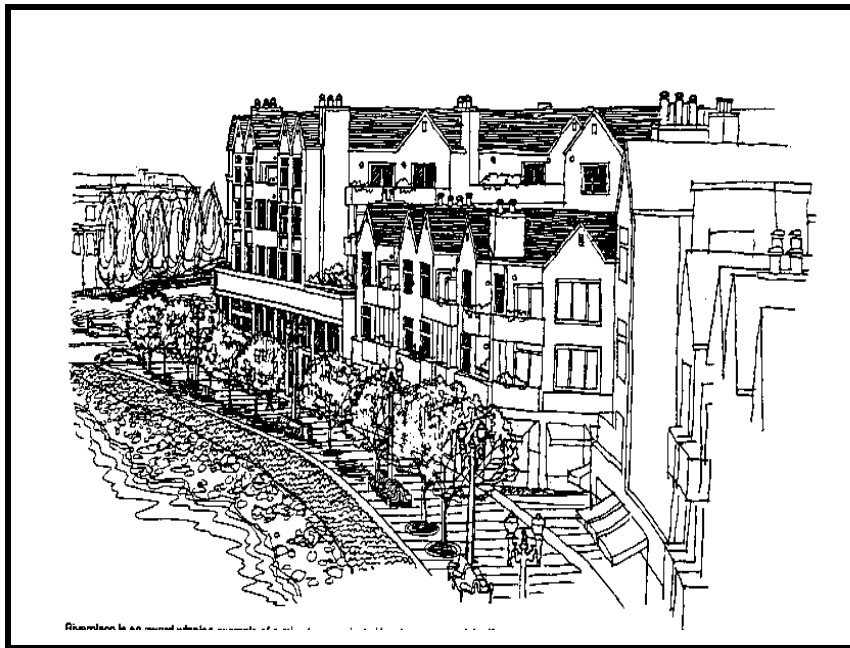
political leaders be kept informed, that their constituents be involved, and that all parties be adequately informed of the risks and benefits of the redevelopment, as well as the risks and costs of not redeveloping.

The city's ability to overcome barriers will ultimately determine the redevelopment project's success. It appears from the case studies that cities must stand strong on one hand, and yet be flexible on the other. They must ensure that their vision does not falter, that citizens are always involved, and that certain regulating factors such as design guidelines are adhered to. But each community is unique, and the approach it takes must be unique, as well. It may be necessary, for example, to lessen the mandate of one or two sustainable properties, such as water and wastewater reduction and reuse and "green" construction, in order to achieve others that the community feels will have a larger impact on overall community sustainability, such as a high-density, mixed-use core and transit orientation.

Additionally, flexibility is necessary in the redevelopment process itself to ensure changes can be made in a responsive manner. By choosing to use its entire municipal boundary as the redevelopment boundary, Suisun City's Redevelopment Agency has effectively limited its ability to deal with other costs or problems as

they arise. That in part explains why business owners on Main Street had to wait for the waterfront improvements to take place. Money available to them was, with few exceptions, not available. This is a rather inflexible approach, but a necessary one given the city's conditions at the time.

One approach for ensuring flexibility is to redevelop in



**RiverPlace is being developed in stages.** Portland Central City Plan.

phases. RiverPlace, for instance, has three phases completed and a fourth under construction. Similarly, redevelopment areas can be

divided into separate parcels utilizing separate developers, as in Suisun City and Tualatin Commons. This allows some parts of the project to continue developing while others, for whatever reasons, cannot.

Variability is in fact the key to implementing efficient and responsive plans. While the properties of sustainable redevelopment and steps of the suburban downtown redevelopment methodology can be used as comprehensive processes, their value is largely in the fact that they can be modified to most appropriately fit specific redevelopments.

These same properties and steps can be used to help communities modify redevelopment plans and processes when they are not successful. They can and indeed must be modified, for example, to accommodate a changing market. With the flexibility inherent in the properties and steps, suburban communities can begin to redevelop their downtowns and city centers for a more sustainable future.

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 \* <http://www.current.com/ct/business/walfight.htm>  
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